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means that I simply must come back here soon, within the next five years — so I can take advantage of the long delay. I expect to know a lot of useful, but academically unimportant things about the Kuliseu before I get through. This is the place — if I ever heard of one — where a half-dozen ethnologists should be working. Friendly Indians as yet untouched; twenty or more villages within a radius of a month's travel — all of which are culturally different, one from the other. In fact nothing nicer can be imagined.[5]

Although several expeditions had penetrated the upper Xingú area before Quain's time, the greater part of the region was unexplored. Karl von den Steinen is perhaps the best known of the early investigators. Reports of his trips in 1884 and 1887 are given in *Durch Central-Brasilien: Erste Schingu Expedition*[4] and in *Unter den Naturvölkern Zentral-Brasiliens*,[5] respectively. Together they provide us with the first ethnographic data on the tribes of the upper Xingú area. Von den Steinen was warned by the other tribes in the area not to visit the Trumaí, who were said to be dangerous warriors and antagonistic to all outsiders. But contact was made eventually, first with isolated individuals and later with two villages. Von den Steinen describes the small, thin people who received him and his colleagues with solicitous hospitality. Some women still wore the traditional pubic covering, the *aluri*. The German ethnographer also noted the peculiar speech of the Trumaí, their excitability, their uneasy relationships and wars with neighboring tribes, and certain features of material culture.

Von den Steinen's expeditions were followed by numerous others, but only those of Hermann Meyer in 1896 and 1899,[6] Max Schmidt in 1901,[7] and Vincent Petrullo in 1931[8] had ethnological importance. Yet systematic knowledge of the upper Xingú tribes remained relatively scanty, limited to information mainly on material culture and word lists. In fact, until Quain's visit to the Trumaí, most of the ethnographic researches in the area were essentially in the nature of general surveys. Although Quain's data are incomplete, his was the first attempt to study with modern anthropological methods the life of an upper Xingú River tribe, and this at a time when the people of the area were still relatively undisturbed by outside influences.

Today, however, the long isolation of the upper Xingú River area is being broken. In 1945, an expedition of the Central Brazil Foundation, which aimed at opening a road through Brazil to the Amazon, penetrated the region, and constructed a landing strip. The Brazilian Indian Service now maintains a permanent post in the heart of this region, and several anthropologists (and numerous other scientists, journalists, and tourists) have traveled into the area by Brazilian Airforce planes.

[5] Quain letter, July 25, 1938.
[4] Von den Steinen 1886.
[5] Von den Steinen 1897.
[6] Meyer 1896—7 and 1900.
[7] Schmidt 1902—4.
[8] Petrullo 1932.

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line by canoe would involve a journey of several hundred miles through mostly uninhabited country. The southern approach is the only feasible one for surface transportation. Even this is difficult as canoes and pack animals are needed after leaving Cuyabá. Between that city and the upper Xingú, the Planalto de Matto Grosso intervenes. This is an extremely rugged upland, hard to traverse. The isolation of the area made difficulties for ethnologists, but these were more than compensated for by the intactness of the native cultures. The establishment in 1947 of an outpost and airstrip of the Fundação Brasil Central, located below the juncture of the Kuluene and Kuliseu rivers, has done much to overcome the physical obstacles. The near future should see a considerable increase in ethnographic data from the headwaters of the Xingú.

In 1938 the Trumaí village was situated on the Kuluene River near its juncture with the Kuliseu. The Kuluene is the easternmost of the six parallel rivers that form the headwaters of the Xingú. The Xingú, itself, is one of the largest of the rivers tributary to the Amazon. It joins the Amazon about two hundred miles from the mouth of that river, after flowing from south to north for approximately one thousand miles. The six rivers which flow parallel to each other for over two hundred miles and then join to form the Xingú are, from east to west, the Kuluene, Kuliseu, Batoví, Jatobá, Ronuro, and Steinen rivers. They rise in the uplands, flowing through plains country and gallery forest. Further downstream they widen out and begin their descent into the tropical rain forest. The open country between the streams diminishes and the area covered by forest increases. The terrain is flat with but slight elevations between the rivers. Opening on the rivers are marshy subsidiary streams and large systems of lagoons which extend for several miles. Adjacent to the Kuluene and Kuliseu are broad sections of periodically inundated savannah lands, which are little used by the Indian population.

The heavy rains from October to April have the same profound effect upon the annual cycle of life here as they do in other sections of the Brazilian rain forest. Of great importance, also, is the effect of the rains upon the soil. The rains are too heavy to allow the surface soil to retain them. The water runs off or sinks deeply into the loose earth, leaching the surface of minerals and making it poor for agriculture. Since no form of mineral replenishment is used, a garden plot becomes exhausted in about two or three years, or after two plantings.

Nevertheless, the rain forest is suitable for primitive agriculture, since the looseness of the soil makes it ideally adapted to the primitive tools in use. As the open grasslands in this section of South America have extremely poor soil and cannot be tilled with simple hand tools, the Trumaí, like other tropical forest peoples, are forced to make their gardens in forest clearings in locations that are not flooded annually.

[text continues on p. 7]

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zoomorphic benches; the bull roarer; use of the spear-thrower in inter-tribal games; whistling arrows; the mode of hair-cutting and body painting and ornamentation; the use of the *uluri*, or triangular bark pubic cover. The basic subsistence economies of the upper Xingú groups are almost identical, and there are strong similarities in social organization. In the latter sphere, the extended family, bilaterality with some patrilineal emphasis, patrilocality, and the men's cult appear general. The various tribes share many of the same ceremonies and co-participate in some. Insofar as is known, shamanism is much the same among all groups, and there is great similarity in religious beliefs and in mythology.

Trumaí History

Although the linguistic affiliations of the other upper Xingú peoples indicate their origins to be in the north, all available evidence points to a migration of the Trumaí from the southeast. Apparently this move did not occur very long ago, for the Trumaí themselves still tell of it. According to Trumaí tradition they came into their present habitat from a land far to the southeast. There, they say, there is still a Trumaí village. Informants varied as to whether or not the forebears of the Xingú Trumaí knew how to grow manioc. They were said to have had long hair like the Gê-speaking Suyá, to hunt tapir, and to tie up their penes. Matiwana, the old man of the Trumaí, claimed to remember when the Trumaí still treated their genitalia in this way. He also claimed that, when the Trumaí moved into the area and saw the Kamayurá and other tribes, they adopted the customs of hair-cutting and penis freedom. The tale, coupled with the fact that the Trumaí women did not use the true *uluri* pubic cover when von den Steinen first visited them,[8] suggests a fairly recent entry of the Trumaí into the upper Xingú area — perhaps no earlier than the nineteenth century — and due possibly to the pressures of white colonization.

Other evidence also argues for the recency of the present Trumaí habitat. The diffusion of culture traits in the upper Xingú is extensive, and in most cases it is difficult to determine the direction of borrowing. The Trumaí lexicon, however, shows heavy influence from their neighbors, especially the nearby Kamayurá. This influence manifests itself chiefly in names of plants and objects of material culture and in ceremonial songs. The songs of two major Trumaí ceremonies, both of which are practiced also by the Kamayurá, show a preponderance of Kamayurá words and phrases. Carib and Arawakan words are frequent in other songs. Also, the word for bull roarer in both Kamayurá and Trumaí is *uriuri*. The Trumaí words for such typically tropical forest domestica-

[8] Von den Steinen, 1897, p. 193.

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ted plants as beans and gourds and for the flat manioc flour cake, the *beijú*, are almost identical with the corresponding Kamayurá words.

The pre-contact history of the Trumaí is largely inferential and their recent history is poorly documented. The white explorers and scientists who visited the upper Xingú frequently did not encounter the Trumaí, and almost never visited their villages. Historical data indicate that in von den Steinen's time and possibly as late as the 1931 trip of Petrullo the Trumaí lived in two villages. Von den Steinen showed an abandoned Trumaí village, in substantially its present location, and another on the lower end of the Tsahuku, a network of waterways and lagoons west of and parallel to the Kuliseu River.[6] Although Meyer's map did not show this southern village in 1896,[7] it appears in Schmidt's map for 1901.[8] Petrullo encountered Trumaí, most probably of the southern village, on the west bank of the Kuliseu, between the locales of the Nahukwa and Mehinaku villages.[9] M. Moennich, one of a party of American missionaries who descended the Kuliseu in 1937, did not, however, note a Trumaí village near this site.[10] When Quain arrived in 1938 there was only one Trumaí village, which was located at the northern site. This would suggest that the southern village was abandoned in 1937–38, but it is possible that those Trumaí seen by Petrullo and Moennich were the same ones whom Quain visited.

The northern and southern villages mentioned in the literature are the only ones recorded. It is certain that since 1884 there have only been two communities, although each has been located in many different places. Unfortunately, the exact locations of the abandoned sites and their periods of occupation are not well known. Each of the old village locales had a name, and these designations are still known. Among them are Morena, Waniwani, Karajaja, Iakare, Jawpew, and Wahldat. Some of the names, such as Iakare, are obviously of Tupian origin. Jawpew was the name of the northern Trumaí village at the time of von den Steinen's expeditions. Karajaja was the last location before the one in which Quain resided. This site was located near the Kamayurá village on the Tsahuku and appears on Petrullo's map. The Trumaí said that it was a good village, but that they had to move because the Kamayurá and Auetí were practicing sorcery against them. The village to which they moved, and where Quain visited them, was named Anariatan.

People were often referred to by other Trumaí according to the village in which they were born. Thus, a *Wahldat jaxlo* was, literally, a son of Wahldat. Also, garden sites were most commonly named after an abandoned village. The old villages were looked on with reverence as the homes of the ancestors of the Trumaí. They were considered to be places of great interest, and Quain was repeatedly urged to visit them.

[6] *Ibid.*, 1897, p. 93.
[7] Meyer 1897, Plate I.
[8] Schmidt 1942.
[9] Petrullo 1932, p. 180.
[10] Moennich 1942.

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The fishing grounds and the still productive fruit trees of the old villages were considered to be the domain of the Trumaí, and these rights were apparently respected by others. When the village moved in search of new land, it was usually to one of the old sites, whose name the new village would take.

The Trumaí were once feared by the other tribes of the upper Xingú and were evidently a relatively numerous and vigorous people. However, when Quain visited them in 1938, they numbered only 43, and only ten years later, in 1948, the population had shrunken to a meagre 25.[11] Their small numbers had forced them to abandon village life once since Quain's visit, but they subsequently reunited in a new community.[11a]

Warfare

The topography of the flat upper Xingú Basin encourages considerable contact between tribes. The waterways are extensive and have importance beyond subsistence, as they are the chief avenues of trade and warfare. Communication through the river and flood plain system is the main reason for the high degree of cultural homogeneity that has been achieved by these tribes of diverse origins and languages. Intertribal relations are not confined to trade and warfare, but enter the spheres of social organization, ceremonialism and mythology.

Intertribal bonds within the upper Xingú Basin were based on peaceful relations between the tribes. These tribes formed part of a bounded social system in which groups outside the area did not take part. The Bakairí Indians of the Paranatinga River were on a friendly basis with the headwaters groups only because they had once lived on the Batoví River. Other tribes were uniformly enemies, regardless of cultural or linguistic affinities. Despite this peaceful interaction among the upper Xingú villages, there was considerable mutual fear and hostility between them which was expressed in witchcraft, petty thievery and intimidation. The practice of sorcery upon other villages is especially significant, in that sorcery is used in nearly all cultures only between people who share close interpersonal ties. This illustrates better than anything else the high degree of intervillage integration in the upper Xingú River Basin. The component groups constitute far more than a culture area — they form a society.

Despite the nominal peace within the upper Xingú area, the Trumaí lived in dread of their neighbors, and with good reason.[12] Situated

[11] Oberg 1953, p. 4.

[11a] Latest reports state that a measles epidemic has wrought great havoc, and that the few survivors have all joined other groups.

[12] Although fear of neighboring groups is general in the upper Xingú, de Lima (1949, p. 28) noted it to be especially strong among the numerically weak Trumaí.

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although a Mehinaku woman and a Suyá woman who had dwelled among the Waurá were living there. 439

The origin of specialization apparently lies in the diversity of the original cultures of the upper Xingú tribes. While a great degree of cultural homogeneity was subsequently attained through interaction and diffusion, certain culturally specialized items became integral to the trade relationships that were a functional part of intertribal social life. Trade became standardized, and monopolies were thereby perpetuated. The Kamayurá-type bow and the Waurá pot were not only essential to the Trumaí economy, but trade in these items with these tribes was expected and served to reinforce the structure of the supra-village society. 182 439

In addition to trade in specialized products, there was active exchange of other items of Western and native manufacture, such as feathers, fishhooks, line, cotton yarn, cloth, paper, beads, and trinkets. This, however, did not require organized trading trips, as did the exchange of the specialized products. The Trumaí traveled for the specific purpose of trading salt or securing pots and bows, although such transactions were also carried out during ordinary visits and at intertribal ceremonials. The non-specialized items were taken along on all visits in anticipation of a lively afternoon of trading, but they were incidental to such expeditions. 439 484 [177]

Despite the economic foundation of upper Xingú trade, all exchanges were considered gifts. No aspect of trade was recognized as divorced from personal relations. Food was shared freely in the community and did not enter into trade. Quain was the only person in the Trumaí village who traded to obtain food. 439 437 431 [123]

Quain believed that there was a scale of values and a concept of equivalence in trade, as certain proffered articles were rejected by sellers as inadequate. The individual exchanges indicated some equivalence, and there was a tendency for particular categories of goods to be exchanged. Men traded arrows for fishhooks and gourds for small pots. Trinkets also formed a class. However, when dealing in specialized products, payment in another specialty was not required. Western goods were especially desired. Knives and axes were in great demand, and, once given to an Indian by a white man, they entered into active trade circulation. There was sufficient cross-cutting between the classes of articles to suggest the operation of a more comprehensive scale of values, but, unfortunately, Quain had to leave the Trumaí before this could be verified. 439 435 [177]

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The usual procedure was for each man to clear a garden plot adjacent to the others; in this way the two large clearings of Nariatan and Waniwanitan were created. The three isolated small clearings might have been nuclei for future large clearings.

All the trees in the plot to be cleared were felled, and the underbrush was slashed away. This has been done with steel axes since the upper Xingú Indians came in contact with the outside world. Quain noted that much more work must have been involved in clearing the forest when stone axes were used. Even with improved implements, clearing land was the most arduous work done by the Trumaí. Stumps were not uprooted, nor were the fallen trees and shrubs removed. The dead vegetation was allowed to dry, and the plot was burned over just before planting in September. When planting, the Trumaí followed the simple expedient of avoiding burned tree trunks and stumps. One year old garden plots were made ready for replanting simply by pulling out or chopping down weeds.

The heavy work of clearing the land fell to the men. In one case reported by Quain, two men from the same household cleared a plot jointly, but in all other instances each garden was cleared by one man.

Permanent rights to land resided in the community as a whole, but gardens were spoken of as belonging to the man who had cleared the land. He also had proprietary rights over the crops, even when he had not planted them himself. Generally, however, such fine points of property were not an issue, as the man who cleared the land usually planted it. Land tenure was a function of use only.

Absolute, permanent ownership of property in land would have had no purpose, as the gardens were temporary and were abandoned when the soil was exhausted after two consecutive plantings.

The planting season began after the first light rains and lasted from about the middle of September to about the second week in October. The first heavy daytime rains arrive at the beginning of October and become more frequent throughout the month. Thus the sowing was done after the earth was moistened, but before the rains arrived in full force.

Quain made note of a variety of food plants growing in the Trumaí gardens. These included bitter manioc (*ole*), corn (*xotet*), squash, large beans (*kuman*), small beans (*kumana'i*), sweet potatoes (*mani*), sugar cane (*kanaviya*), a species of pineapple (*waxus ruyan*), and banana trees (*tsi tdatdat*). Among the domesticated non-food plants were tobacco, cotton (*amundyu*), the castor bean (*patasy*), and *urucú* (*maidot*). Quain believed that the castor bean was used for the round hollow point of the whistling arrow, but Oberg says that the Kamayurá make theirs with hollow nuts of the tucúm palm.[1] *Urucú* is a plant bearing a pod, the

[1] Oberg 1953, p. 31.

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Each man planted his garden without male assistance. However, when planting vegetables other than manioc, he was often aided by his wife or wives. During the whole Trumaí planting season Quain observed only one instance of cooperative labor in manioc planting. This occurred in the garden of Uluku, a Kamayurá, who had cleared a plot in the Trumaí gardens but had not returned in time to plant it. The work was initiated by the Trumaí chief, as this was an obligation of the village to an outsider. However, the men largely ignored his call and, of those who responded, most were co-residents of the chief.

Fishing Techniques

A variety of fish were caught and eaten by the Trumaí. The exact species were not recorded by Quain, but those in Oberg's partial list are also found in other tributaries of the Amazon.[2] A small fish called *kate* by the Trumaí was caught in great quantities during Quain's visit. Fish figured importantly in the diet throughout the year, but they were not as easily caught during the rainy season when the rivers overflowed into the adjacent forest. Fish were taken by hook and line, bow and arrow, poisoning, traps, nets and weirs.

Shooting with the bow and arrow was the most important single method. The fisherman stood in the bow of his bark canoe with bow and arrow poised while his helper paddled slowly in the stern. When a fish was sighted the arrow usually found its mark with surprising accuracy. Insofar as is known, only hooks and lines obtained from the whites by trade or gift were used. Quain found a great demand for them, and he gave many to the Trumaí and other groups.

Two kinds of poison were used to drug fish in the lagoons. The more important was made from the shredded bark of the *tawasi* tree and was effective only upon the small *kate* fish. The other was made from the ripe fruit of the *fit'a* tree, the bark of which was used in the washing of the body after ceremonial scarification.[3]

Fish traps were baited and set out in the lagoon. These were basket containers, long and rounded in shape. An open-ended basket cone, through which the fish swam, was set in the mouth. Once inside, the fish could not find their way out through the small end of the cone, which was pointed towards the inside of the trap. According to one informant, the Mehinaku could make fish traps, but not the Trumaí. Quain, however, found that at least three Trumaí men made traps,

[2] *Ibid.* pp. 25–26.

[3] The exact species of these trees are not known. Oberg (1953, pp. 26–27) refers to the use of *timbó* in a general sense only. *Timbó* commonly refers to the root of a small shrub and not to the above-mentioned drugs. Von den Steinen (1897) makes no reference to fish drugs.

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The situation was comparable to the previously mentioned communal planting of the garden of the Kamayurá, Uluku.

Canoes

The standard bark canoe of the upper Xingú was made and used by the Trumaí.[4] Construction was simple and much less time was required to complete it than the typical dugout canoe of the tropical forest. A long, rectangular piece of bark was cut from the *jatobá* tree by men standing on platforms. The bark was then heated over a fire to soften it. The sides were bent up, and the top end of the bark, which narrowed slightly, was made into the bow by bending it upwards. The center of the stern was bent inwards, allowing the whole stern to be well above the water. Leaks were mended with patches of river mud or clay. Propulsion was by paddle, although occasionally poles were used.

There was also one small dugout in the village which belonged to Aloari, Quain's cook and helper. Aloari had been a Yuruna captive, and it was undoubtedly during this experience that he had learned to make this type craft. He also had a bark canoe and was the only Trumaí to own two canoes.

Basketry

The Trumaí men manufactured baskets that were variously shaped and served several purposes. In general, the Trumaí were less skilled in this art than their upper Xingú neighbors. Among the baskets described by Quain was a deep, round tray made of *buriti* fiber and another which was used to store manioc flour and, when equipped with shoulder and forehead tumplines, to carry loads. The latter was an openwork container made of bark strips. A smaller basket of this type was made of *buriti* fibers. The manioc sieve, or *tuafi* was made of stiff *buriti* fronds and was also used to store small articles. It was made by the women. The women also made a bark cloth big known as the *idesnit*, a term that, in addition, designated the female pubic covering.

All of the baskets and similar containers described by Quain were made by other groups of the area, but the art of manufacturing certain varieties was known to only a few Trunaí. Some baskets were obtained in trade.

Textiles

All work in cotton was the exclusive province of the women. Hammocks of both twined and woven types were made. The loom consisted of two upright posts between which a warp of *buriti* fiber was extended.

[4] Cf. von den Steinen 1897, pp. 322-23.

[i.e. building Quain's house -- Analyst]

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Necklaces were made by tying feathers to a cotton cord with *buriti* fibers. Headdresses included one consisting of a ring of cotton threads with colored feathers attached. The front feathers were long and formed a sort of plume. Another headdress, a feather topknot tied to a cotton headnet, was captured in warfare with the Caiabí. A third was a crown woven of bamboo splints traded from the Waurá for arrow feathers. There were probably many other kinds, as intertribal trade in headdresses was lively.

Belts and anklets were also traded between tribes. A few Brazilian type shirts and hats had found their way into the Trumaí village. They had been obtained from travelers in the region, and especially from the missionaries, Thomas Young and his wife.

The men wore their hair cut straight around the head on a line even with the tops of the ears. A small patch on the crown was plucked, but Quain noted that the Trumaí were much less careful about keeping these parts free of new growth than were the neighboring groups. The scissors which Quain gave to one of the men replaced the old method of hair cutting with an instrument made of *piranha* teeth. A composite comb (*kuwau*) was also used. The back was made of two parallel pieces of cane joined by cotton thread and the teeth of splints from the small roots of a palm-like shrub.

The Trumaí used several vegetable paints to decorate their bodies. This method of adornment was always invoked for ceremonies, and often for wrestling, or when there were guests. The paint most commonly used was the red *urucú* (*matdot*) which was grown in the gardens. The *urucú* was made into a paste by mixing it with oil from the visceral fat of a fish. The paste could be rolled into a ball and applied directly, or spread with the fingers or a spatula made from the middle rib of the *buriti* leaf.

Other body paints were *tawariri*, a black tree gum mixed with soot, and a preparation made from *piqui* fruit and fish oil. There was also a dye, *aidot*, which was not described, and one or two other paints which Quain was unable to identify. *Jany*, a non-decorative paste made from the liver of a fish, was used to ward off insects.

Designs included dots, crescents, zig-zags, circles, curves, straight lines, and combinations of these. Quain observed several standard patterns, many of which were symbolic; others were possibly symbolic representations also, but he was unable to learn their meanings.

One man painted crescents on his chest above either nipple which he said represented vaginas. A rattlesnake design consisted of a half ellipse on the flanks with dots in the center. Quain was told that a design of red spots, with two near the nipples ringed in black, was a boa constrictor. Another snake pattern, made by painting zig-zags down the sides and back, was used on one of the posts erected during the *ole* ceremony.

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421 437 524 [156] [527] It was significant that Aloari, probably the most aggressive person in the village, was often an organizer and always a main participant in the games. On the other hand, he never cooperated in group work.

This conventionalized form of exchange, which Quain called the trade game, had a strong functional role in Trumaí culture, but there are indications that it was of outside origin. One informant said that it was [177] a Bakairí custom, and Quain thought that the "game" might have been introduced by Bakairí traders bringing goods from the Indian post on the Paranatinga River.[1]

The Household

171 516 622 Among both the Waurá and the Kamayurá the extended family occupied its own house, and the head of the lineage was considered a sub-chief of the village.[2] Such unilocal, co-resident and extended family groupings, which were typical among tribes of the upper Xingú, were absent in the Trumaí village.

592 613 Consanguineally close male relatives usually formed co-resident units, but these nuclei of kinsmen were very small and did not constitute an entire household. Furthermore, they were related to each other through [591] male or female lines. Due to village patrilocality, there was a tendency for patrilineally related males to live together, but this did not result in [165] the establishment of a patrilineal lineage for several reasons. Among them the high death rate was very important.

592 594 Maibu's house illustrates the eclectic nature of the Trumaí household. Four nuclear families, totaling fourteen people, lived in it. Hanging their hammocks from one of the two center posts were Katauka, his son Kamkuti, his brother's son Autsuki, and another brother's son and his wife. At the opposite end of the house were Maibu and his wife, the wife's son by Maibu's deceased brother, Maibu's sister Ayenuke, Makurawa, a classificatory sister's son, and Makurawa's wife and their three children. Although everyone in the household was related, bonds were closer between those people who hung their hammocks from the same post.

589 592 182 Despite the fact that the household, as a unit, had no specific functions, it established the framework within which certain interpersonal dependencies were worked out. Bride-capture, intertribal warfare, divorce, and early death caused a significant proportion of the Trumaí to be temporarily or permanently without mates. This disadvantage was

[1] The trade game was possibly borrowed from the Bakairí, as its existence among this group has been reported by Oberg (1953, p. 72). However, craft specialization and trade on the upper Xingú predates the Indian post. Cf. von den Steinen 1897, pp. 166, 207. [177]

[2] De Lima (1950, p. 9.) reports this arrangement among the Waurá, and Oberg (1953, p. 45.) adds that the position of house chief tends to pass in the male line in the Kamayurá village.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Religious Beliefs and Practices

182 771 829 The lapse of many religious practices and the lessening of interest in those aspects of culture that we classify as religion were striking features of this dying society. Older informants remembered the time when there were ceremonial masks, the flute house, and other traits that are still found among certain tribes of the upper Xingú. Indeed, if it were not for Matiwana's unusual age, the Trumaí would be even more lacking in ceremonial knowledge. Yet there seems to have been little regret on the part of either the older or younger generations for this culture loss. They shrugged it off, saying that their grandfathers had had such [177] practices, but that they did not. This indifference is not too surprising, since much of their religion was borrowed from their upper Xingú neighbors not too long ago.[1]

771 105 Despite the decline in interest in the ceremonial cycle and the disappearance of certain religious traits, the main outlines of Trumaí religion were still observable in Quain's time. Shamanism was still practiced extensively, but it was simple both in form and supporting ideology. Ceremonialism was related to subsistence and curing. The shaman's individualized power resulted in a specialization of religious functions as did the individual ownership of ceremonial songs and dances. Some Trumaí, like old Matiwana, were better versed in the [193] religious rites than others, but they did not constitute a priestly class. While no one person interceded with the supernatural on behalf of the [182] whole village, the group ceremonials provided a focal point for social participation and village cooperation, and many of them were undertaken by the community for the benefit of all.

Shamanism

756 [184] The shamanistic art of curing was known and employed by nearly all the adult males of the village, and in this sense parallels the practices recorded among the Kamayurá by Oberg.[2] There is, however, a type

[1] Kamayurá ceremonial and religious life, much of which was once shared by the Trumaí, is discussed by Oberg (1953) and Galvão (1949, 1950). The extent of Trumaí culture loss can be roughly inferred from these sources and from the work of the earlier ethnologists.

[2] Oberg 1953, p. 60.

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still too young to "see," but that when he was older he would learn, since his father was a shaman. Aloari said that he, too, would learn when he was old, as would his son Tsirikoan. Matiwana would instruct Aloari and would receive a payment for this tutelage. Indicative of a possible looseness of inheritance was the fact that Matiwana's son Yati was nowhere mentioned as a prospective shaman.

Dreams were considered to be a way of "seeing" while sleeping. This was known as *ohltaxer*. Dreams were taken seriously, at least by the dreamer. Aloari fully believed that the Waurá would come after he had dreamed it. And Maibu was convinced that he should make the trip to the Indian post on the Paranatinga River because he had dreamed that Climaco, the agent, liked him very much and would give him a rifle. However, individual dreams were not a matter of community concern or interest. Village action was taken on the basis of shamanistic "seeing" only.

Witchcraft

The only known sorcerer in the Trumaí village was Oirupa, the brother-in-law of Aloari. Oirupa was said by one man to have learned witchcraft (*okei*) from the Nahukwa, who, with the other Cariban tribes, were dreaded for their black magic. Oirupa's knowledge made him one of the most hated men in the village, but no action was taken against him for fear of incurring his enmity. Also, there have been no reports of the execution of sorcerers in the upper Xingú, and, from all indications, this mode of retaliation is not customary.

When someone fell ill and witchcraft was suspected, the guilt was usually imputed to a neighboring tribe. It was said that the Trumaí had to leave their old village site near the Kamayurá because the latter were killing them off with witchcraft. Sorcery was probably often practiced against other groups by the Trumaí, and the converse was always feared. Oirupa refused to speak above a whisper one night when the Auetí were said to be using black magic on the Trumaí.

It was Quain's belief that witchcraft was a substitute for open violence among the people of the area; significantly, witchcraft was not practiced by the people of the upper Xingú against the Suyá and other hostile tribes outside the Basin.[4] Intertribal black magic functioned as a check upon violence within the village as well. Certainly, it was more conducive to social order to attribute sorcery to another tribe than to some member of the small and already disrupted Trumaí community.

[4] Cf. Galvão 1949; Oberg 1953.

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
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but continued at the same pace for about three weeks, and then slowly died down. It would be impossible to say on what day the *ole* ceremony ended.

When the *ole* cycle began it consisted of little except songs and dances. These were usually held shortly before daybreak and at night. About a week afterwards decorated posts were erected in the village center. These "*ole* posts" served as "shrines" to which food offerings were made. In the meantime, dancing and singing went on almost every day. On some days two or three *ole* songs and dances were performed; on others there was little activity.

The intensity of the ritual varied with the number of people in the village and according to whim. The participants changed from day to day, and some took part more often than others. Only certain men knew the songs and dances, and they served as leaders. Other men occasionally joined in and performed an accompanying role, while the women followed the dancers and served as a chorus. The usual procedure was for the men to sing and dance their way from the nearby forest into the plaza, where they were joined by the female chorus. They then made the rounds of all the houses, pausing to sing at each.

Only Matiwana and Nitvary served as leaders of the dance processions, as they had inherited the necessary songs. Makurawa also knew *ole* songs, but his role was always secondary. Nitvary, due to his youth and vigor, was the principal dance leader. Most of the other adult men did not participate in the dances and seemed bored by the activity at times. There was no rule governing female participation in the dance. One of the men initiated the performance without consulting the other men, and the women flocked from their houses of their own will to join the procession, falling in behind the older boys. Quain thought this reflected well the respective roles of the men and women in Trumaí culture. Children always followed in the rear and cried out at the beginning and end of each major sequence in the performance.

There were also *ole* songs for solo performance without choral accompaniment, which were not considered to be the special property of any one man. The soloist made the rounds of all the houses, stopping at each to perform a song and a simple dance. Even the women sang certain *ole* songs, and on one occasion Quain observed two women making the customary rounds together without male accompaniment.

Quain mentioned one song as being quite melodious, and stated that there was greater variation of pitch in songs which were distributed throughout the upper Xingú area. The Trumaí had borrowed songs heavily from their neighbors, and, in fact, had probably borrowed the whole ceremony. Kamayurá verses were most frequently heard, but there was also a significant sprinkling of Cariban words.

The chorus that followed Matiwana and Nitvary gave only the sketchiest accompaniment. The women did not seem to know the songs,

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
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took the axe, and this is why they have been able to build a great civilization. Indeed, white men, although first encountered in 1884, figure in many Trumaí myths. For instance, Waniwani once seduced Uluwa's wife and took her to the land of the white men, which was thought to lie either downstream near the Yuruna or beyond the headwaters of the Kuluene River.

Many ceremonies were first taught by Sun. He presented Maibu's deceased brother with a spear-thrower and taught him the spear-throwing contest. He also first made the masks which the Trumaí once used. The people of the area received cotton and tobacco from Sun, and he gave the fishtrap to the Mehinaku.

The foregoing creation myths collected by Quain were probably only a small part of the Trumaí cycle. Paradoxically, the historic legend of their migration into the area and the subsequent borrowing of culture elements from their neighbors would seem to negate the creation myths in which the Trumaí appear to have always lived in the upper Xingú area. Quain states that they have reconciled the inconsistencies, but he does not support this point with any concrete data. Undoubtedly this problem bothered the ethnographer far more than the Trumaí.

The After-Life

Waniwani, the village of the afterworld, was located in the heavens. In order to get there one had to travel the Milky Way. This was the abode of Panther, and the road was lined with many panthers who inflicted dangerous wounds on the wayfarers. After passing through this gamut, the dead entered the Trumaí village. Here many Trumaí resided, and the rivers and lagoons teemed with *kate* fish. These were usually caught by poisoning, as the *tawasi* tree grew in abundance. There was no death in this afterworld; it was only on earth that death was feared, said the Trumaí.

Jemenary and Kelenewary

The last of the Trumaí myths collected by Quain concerned Jemenary and his trickster nephew Kelenewary. This story, which has a decided Oedipus theme with the maternal uncle in the father role, was the only context in which these two appeared, and they cannot be identified further than to say that they were mythological beings who lived in the "long ago" of the Trumaí.

Jemenary was angry with Kelenewary because the latter, his *deta*, or sister's son, was sleeping with his wife. Kelenewary knew no shame, for a good Trumaí would never have done such a thing. Jemenary tried by a series of ruses to rid himself of his nephew. He ordered him to

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
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The main motivation for going into the brush to defecate was not modesty, but a feeling of revulsion for body products. One did not eliminate in places frequented by people. Yanahi was disgusted when Quain defecated in his garden and claimed that the garden was ruined. Similarly, it was considered repulsive to defecate in the water. When Quain described the great ship that had brought him to Brazil, the only thing that the Trumaí found hard to believe was that the people aboard would have to eliminate in the water.

The rules of etiquette required a person entering or leaving company to make an appropriate statement. The salutation usually consisted of a phrase stating what the person being greeted was doing at the moment. Thus, typical greetings were, "You are eating," "You have returned from fishing," "You are sitting," and so on. When leaving a person or group it was proper to announce, "I am leaving," followed generally by a statement of what one was going to do. If this last was not observed, the departing person was usually asked where he was going. These formalities were not as regularly invoked in the larger gatherings as in house-visiting.

The rules of etiquette also required the emission of conventionalized cries on particular occasions, such as the bringing of food into the village or the offering of tobacco to guests. In the latter case the person making the presentation cried "*aha*," the recipient "*ha-a-a ha ha ha*." These amenities, which were observed between the Trumaí, were always louder when an outsider was involved.

Hospitality was extended to all upper Xingú Indians and white men who visited the village. In part this was inspired by a fear of their neighbors, in part by etiquette. The Trumaí had little reason to fear Quain; yet he was treated with the greatest kindness and consideration, and everyone was eager to converse with him. Indeed, their attentions were so constant that at times he wanted nothing more than to be left alone.

While the men were far more self-assertive than the women, they were also extremely sensitive. They were insulted at the refusal of a request, or at the denial of what they considered to be the recognition due them as individuals. They did not like to be treated as faceless members of a group. During the argument that followed Quain's complaint that some article of his had been stolen, Maibu criticized him for addressing them collectively as "Trumaí," while they always called him "*capitão*" or by his name.

The Trumaí were greatly interested in Western goods and their behavior toward whites was unrestrained. The following quotation from Quain's field notes describes this succinctly:

> The reason why it is so difficult to live with these people is that they are so "impolite." At least in their dealings with me, an outsider, and with the mission-

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
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CHAPTER SIX

The Death of a Culture

Today there are but twenty-five remaining Trumaí. The fact that they disbanded once during the recent past shows that this small number approaches a critical point at which such a culture is no longer socially viable. If the present population trend continues, Trumaí society will definitely end, and, with the complete assimilation of the descendants of the Trumaí into other tribes, Trumaí culture, except for those elements of it that have been adopted by their neighbors, will belong to the past.

Primitive cultures and the populations that transmitted them are disappearing in many parts of the world today. In most instances, however, they are being destroyed by extended face-to-face contacts with Western society. This is not precisely the case with the Trumaí. Here, there was no large scale transmission of Western culture and no direct interaction with Brazilian society. But slight though the contact of the upper Xingú Indians with the whites was, it resulted in the introduction of respiratory infections that contributed greatly to their depopulation. In this sense, the white man is responsible for the impending death of the Trumaí.

Although the Trumaí were still carrying on their village life during Quain's residence and were to continue to do so, certain changes were taking place in their culture which were symptomatic of the fundamental instability induced by their low numbers.

It is immediately apparent that their weakness made the Trumaí vulnerable to other tribes, both the nominally friendly ones of the upper Xingú Basin, and the hostile ones of the surrounding country. In 1938 the Trumaí could not have successfully withstood a strong Suyá or Yuruna raid, nor could they have launched an attack upon the Suyá for women, as did the more vigorous Kamayurá. Indeed, the Trumaí had good reason to fear the least sound in the jungle at night.

Also, the Trumaí were held in low esteem by their immediate neighbors at the time of Quain's study. This was a severe blow to their *elan*, and it undoubtedly affected their self-image. It led, too, to more concrete results. As noted above, other tribes took Trumaí women during their most fertile years, and it is almost certain that the few "outside" women, who were brought into the Trumaí village through marriage, failed to restore the balance. Moreover, there were no "outside" men

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
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APPENDIX

Buell Quain, in a letter to the late Dr. Ruth Benedict written from Brazil on December 21, 1938, summarized several aspects of Trumaí culture which have a direct and immediate bearing on their decline. Following are excerpts of ethnological interest from this letter, which was discovered after this monograph was completed:

"They are a dying culture. Each generation improves its imitation of Kamayurá culture. Everyone in the village knows a few Kamayurá words. Almost all the songs in the manioc fertility ceremony are Kamayurá. Half the people in the village can carry on a conversation in Kamayurá with ease. One household (there are four) uses Kamayurá in preference to Trumaí. The mother of the house owner speaks no Trumaí; she is a Kamayurá woman who has lived with the Trumaí for about twenty-five years. The child of the household, a ten year old girl, confuses Kamayurá kinship terms with Trumaí in classifying the village. All Trumaí women between twenty and forty have been captive wives among the Kamayurá (which puts the Trumaí men in a peculiar position which they fully but fruitlessly resent) .... They have lots of disorganized leisure. They are sleepy (in part because of insects and fear throughout the night). They are ready to imitate not only the Kamayurá, but me, in petty daily habits. No outsider speaks Trumaí.

"There is nobody among them who volunteers information of ethnological value. For three months I dug for structure and got very little... Dullness cannot be attributed to the climate.

"The village is small .... Each of the four households — now five because of a recent split — are organized, or perhaps disorganized, according to different sociological principals. Three of the seventeen women are of foreign birth; one is Kamayurá, one is Mehinaku, and one is Suyá. The first two speak no Trumaí. A fourth woman with ringworm and two sick children is said to be Yaulapití, but she is well set in Trumaí culture. Nobody claims her as a relative (in part because of aversion toward her ringworm); hence she is used as a prostitute by every man in the village — she is the village joke. Among the men, I have found remarkably uniform responses to various 'tests'. (I said 'Draw a picture of a woman and a man.' Every man but one drew the woman first and oriented her in a distinctive way on the paper. The women showed no such regularity. One Kamayurá man tested also lacked this stereotyped response.)

B /201 cont./
*171 in remote epochs, /202/ for the phonetic softening processes
174 and the disappearance of the initial root-sounds, which are
241 present everywhere in the individual dialects, show a development in the same direction, but in different gradations everywhere with respect to degree and limits, show only equivalence, not conformity, and therefore could have started only after the separation from the basic people. Nevertheless, even the basic peoples have names for the most important useful plants; they are entirely different from one basic people to another, but for the individual basic stock they are common among a greater or lesser number of branches. For the Karaiben /Carib/ I believe I have proved these statements in my Bakaïrí grammar, I can likewise maintain them for the Tupí after more recent studies; for the Nu-Aruak /Arawak/, where the material is inadequate and difficult, I reserve all judgment and merely point out that, on the basis of historical and ethnological data, we must conclude that the Nu-Aruak undoubtedly have an older culture than the Karaiben and certainly the Gês, and probably also an older
T [192] one than the Tupí. The Trumaí borrowed their names for the most important useful plants in part from the Nu-Aruak, in part from the Tupí.

B [181] Thus, we have a contradiction with respect to the common conception: ancient agriculture along with the world view of
B [773] hunters. The Bakaïrí said to me: "Our grandfathers did not
[261] know anything about maize and mandioca, instead they ate earth" -- which the present-day Indians only nibble. In the bagadú legend they say that mandioca was first given as a gift
BO [241] to the campo residents. In the Mato Grosso different stages of development are found side by side: in the case of the Bororó we
[153] shall become acquainted with a mighty tribe for whom the cultivation of food plants was an incomprehensible beginning, who, without need, most speedily pulled out and consumed the
T [241] mandioca roots planted for them, before the roots were scarcely more than thin young shoots -- we recognize from the language and
[179] also hear from the tradition that the Trumaí were taught agriculture only recently by their neighbors, and we find among them excellently tended, extensive plantings--

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/321 cont./

How does the artist arrive at this peculiarity? After all, on the frieze (cf. Plate 21/see p. 281/) the fish are drawn as they swim. Well, on the masks the fish also stand on their tails; one need only look at the fish makanari of the Bakaïrí, page 349, and the black Kamayurá mask, page 368. Indeed, the only time we come across the mereschu fish as a single individual outside the net, on the gull mask of the Bakaïrí, page 289, Fig. 44, it is standing vertically. On the woven masks, however, which are the ones that matter since they are the oldest, the fish was drawn in a position unnatural in itself and for the fish, /322/ because they have the elongated oval position corresponding to the face; if one imagines the piava of the fish makanari, page 349, as horizontal, one will realize, first, that the fish would then be contracted, secondly, that it would look positively unnatural to have the fish swimming across the face because it would be contrary to the main direction. A glance at door and window arrangements shows the same requirement for us,

Thus, net and fish were painted with upright rhombuses on the elongated oval mask. Look at the great number of the mask illustrations with the mereschu design: the same position everywhere. We saw only one exception and it proves the rule rather than running counter to it. This is a Trumaí mask. The good Trumaí, however, borrowed the masks from the Kamayurá, just as they learned of cotton and the sieve-mat among them, and they designate them with the Tupí name. They did not take part in the developmental process.

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[532]
[535]
[177]

We now also understand the close connection between net and mereschu fish and the abundant production of this particular fish. Within each mesh was drawn a fish, which had to be small, because otherwise it would not fit in the space, which also had the same rhomboid shape as the net mesh. Finally, we understand how, with the fine work, the representation of the head, fins, and tail was done by filling in the corners. In short, everything agrees so excellently, both for the design and for the course of development, that I regard the proof as demonstrated, insofar as this is possible.